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Confidence-building measures in the regional and subregional context

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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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II. Replies received from States

Sierra Leone

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1. Sierra Leone supported General Assembly resolution 59/87 and was pleased that it was adopted without a vote. Its relevance for Sierra Leone can be seen in the context of the report of the Secretary-General on ways to combat subregional and cross-border problems in West Africa (S/2004/200), especially in recommendations 3 and 4 on collaboration in the Mano River Union area.

2. The foreign policy objectives of Sierra Leone enshrined in its Constitution are based on the principles of good-neighbourliness and mutual respect among all nations. As a founding member of the Mano River Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Sierra Leone strongly believes that good-neighbourliness serves as a catalyst for achieving the objectives of regional and subregional economic cooperation and integration. Notwithstanding the role of external elements in the West African subregion in fomenting and prolonging the rebel conflict in Sierra Leone, the Government of Sierra Leone continues to initiate and promote confidence-building measures for the maintenance of peace and stability, particularly in the Mano River Union area.

3. Taking into account the relatively fragile security situation in the subregion, or what is described as the "porosity" of the borders, as well as the need to ensure that the peace it has achieved is not jeopardized, Sierra Leone is fully committed to implementation of the fifteenth Protocol to the Mano River Union Declaration. The Protocol establishes a framework for an effective mechanism, including joint border security and confidence-building units, to monitor and ensure the security of common borders to prevent, control, discourage, forestall and avert security-related problems in the border regions of the member States of the Union — Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

4. Sierra Leone continues to attach importance to efforts to facilitate the full functioning of the Joint Border Security and Confidence-Building Units, including the responsibility to prevent the transfer and proliferation of illicit small arms and their ammunition. In this context, Sierra Leone strictly complies with all Security Council arms embargoes and the ECOWAS Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacturing of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Sierra Leone is in the forefront of the campaign to transform the Moratorium into a legally binding instrument.

5. As far as other practical confidence-building measures are concerned, the following important developments underscore the determination of Sierra Leone to promote friendly relations and enhance peace and security in the subregion:

(a) Towards the end of last year, President Kabbah of Sierra Leone and President Conte of Guinea held another fruitful dialogue on issues of mutual concern to their two countries, in particular the issue of the Sierra Leone-Guinea border along the Makona/Moa River. President Conte reassured President Kabbah that peace would always prevail between Sierra Leone and Guinea and that the people of both countries would always live as good neighbours. The two leaders

signed a memorandum of understanding, reiterating that the village of Yenga belongs to Sierra Leone, while the Makona/Moa River between cairns 15 and 16 belongs to the Republic of Guinea;

(b) It was agreed that to allay fears and dispel rumours, the physical demarcation of the boundary should be carried out in accordance with the Anglo-French Treaty of 1912, confirmed by the 1974 Agreement between Guinea and Sierra Leone. Proposals for joint deployment in the area of security personnel from both countries were to be initiated as a confidence-building measure to avoid any unwarranted exploitation of the issue of Yenga. The demarcation exercise is scheduled for early October 2005;

(c) A Mano River Union summit in July 2005, initiated by President Kabbah, reaffirmed the commitment of the leaders of the three countries to pursue a friendly and peaceful solution to the border issues along the Makona/Moa River. This was in conformity with the memorandum of understanding signed in Conakry on 2 September 2004, reiterating that Yenga belongs to Sierra Leone and that the Makona/Moa River between cairns 15 and 16 belongs to Guinea;

(d) Recognizing the role of civil society, local communities and others in promoting confidence-building measures to avoid an intended or accidental outbreak of hostilities in the subregion, Sierra Leone hosted a meeting of parliamentarians, chiefs and elders of the Kissi people of three border districts in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone from 17 to 20 February 2005. Heads of State or Government attended the meeting, which was held in Koindu, in the Kailahun District;

(e) The representatives of the Kissi people expressed their conviction that the meeting provided a rare opportunity to build bridges of good neighbourliness, enhance regional security and promote sociocultural and economic initiatives beneficial to people in the border areas. They stressed the urgent need to strengthen the ties that unify the Mano River Union and to support their respective Governments to enforce the regional and subregional protocols relating to peace and security and the free movement of people, goods and services in the subregion. They also resolved, inter alia, that every effort should be made to discourage the enlistment of mercenaries and the recruitment of child combatants, and that no State should use its territory as a training ground or launching pad to destabilize a neighbouring State;

(f) The re-establishment of international markets at Koindu, Gueckedou and Foya was also seen as a further confidence-building measure in the Mano River Union area.